UNITED NATIONS **E**

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/C.12/2002/SR.4
7 May 2002

Original: ENGLISH

COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Twenty-eighth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 4th MEETING

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 30 April 2002, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Mr. CEAUSU (Vice-Chairperson)

CONTENTS

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS (continued)

(a) REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH ARTICLES 16 AND 17 OF THE COVENANT (continued)

Initial report of the Czech Republic (continued)

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent within one week of the date of this document to the Official Records Editing Section, room E.4108, Palais des Nations, Geneva.

Any corrections to the records of the meetings of the Committee at this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum to be issued shortly after the end of the session.

GE.02-41491 (E) 060502 070502

In the absence of Ms. Bonoan-Dandan, Mr. Ceausu, Vice-Chairperson, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS (agenda item 6) (continued)

(a) REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH ARTICLES 16 AND 17 OF THE COVENANT (continued)

Initial report of the Czech Republic (continued) (E/1990/5/Add.47; E/C.12/Q/CZE/1; HR/CESCR/NONE/2001/10; HRI/CORE/1/Add.71)

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, Ms. Barsova, Mr. Cink, Mr. Fuchs, Mr. Schorm and Mr. Veselý (Czech Republic) took places at the Committee table.

Articles 6-9 of the Covenant

2. Mr. MALINVERNI said that according to the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, in 2000 some 100,000 workers had received their wages late, with delays ranging from two to five months. He asked whether the Government had taken any steps to correct that situation.

3. Mr. WIMER ZAMBRANO, noting that the unemployment rates reported for women were much higher than those for men, asked the delegation to comment on possible gender discrimination in the labour market. It would be useful if the State party could in its next report provide the Committee with more detailed statistics in that regard.

4. The CHAIRPERSON, speaking as a member of the Committee, said that the Government's replies to questions 15 and 16 in the list of issues did not sufficiently describe the results of the measures it had taken. For example, it would be useful for the Committee to learn how many members of the Roma minority were enrolled in the various programmes implemented by the Government, and specifically how many had found employment. Did the Government take part in any programmes in favour of the Roma minority funded by the European Union? On question 16, how many disabled persons were considered to be fit for work, and how many were employed and unemployed? What methodology was used by the Government in setting the subsistence level mentioned in paragraph 261 of the report (E/1990/5/Add.47)? The report compared the subsistence level to average gross wages. It would perhaps be more appropriate to use the average net wage as a reference.

5. Mr. SADI noted that the preamble to the Act on Minorities made reference to minorities as determined by their own culture, traditions and language. Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights included religion as a factor as well. Was the omission of religion from the preamble intentional? Article 2 of the Act defined the term minority as "a community of citizens", yet General Comment No. 23 of the Human Rights Committee stated that citizenship should not be a criterion for determining the existence of a minority.

6. Mr. TEXIER said that, according to a report issued in November 2000 by the European Commission, the remuneration of women remained about 25 per cent lower than that of men for the same work. What efforts had been made to ensure equal pay for equal work? Was the Government taking any measures to provide for retirement benefits for the country's population, which was reportedly ageing? Was it relying on a pay-as-you-go scheme, or was there a funded pension plan?

7. Mr. FUCHS (Czech Republic) said that notwithstanding the fact that the Government had recently introduced specific legislation establishing the principle of equal pay for equal work, in practice women still received less pay than men. It had been estimated that some 10 percentage points of the 25 to 27 per cent gap between average wages of men and women were attributable to discrimination by employers, the rest being caused by other factors, such as the types and levels of occupations in which women predominated, shorter working periods and family responsibilities. Under the new legislation, labour inspectors had received special instructions to bring cases of discrimination to light and to impose sanctions. The issue was also regularly raised with the Government's social partners in tripartite forums.

8. Under the law, the burden of proof of equal treatment rested with the employer. The Government therefore encouraged women who had been subjected to discrimination to bring suit. It was hoped that such cases would raise public awareness of the problem. In addition to those efforts, the Research Institute of Labour and Social Affairs had been asked to study the reasons for the difference in wages for men and women.

9. The Czech pension system had two basic components. A guaranteed, statutory pay-as-you-go pension scheme for all workers provided retirees with about half their previous net income. That system would face serious difficulties as the population aged. The Government had in 2001 submitted a package of bills for reform of the pension system, including the introduction of an additional retirement fund pillar. Apart from the statutory system, a complementary private pension scheme had been introduced in 1994. Some 2.5 million workers were covered by about 20 private pension funds under that system, which currently resembled a savings scheme more than a pension fund.

10. Attempts by the minority Government to amend both pension schemes so as to ensure their financial health and improve their operation had failed, as they had failed to receive support in Parliament. Discussions on the future of the pension system had since been suspended until the parliamentary elections in June 2002. The Government had received recommendations and advice on pension reform from a number of sources, including the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

11. Ms. BARSOVA (Czech Republic) said that the reason religion was not mentioned in the preamble to the Act on Minorities was that religion was not a distinguishing feature for most minorities in the Czech Republic, with the exception of the Jewish community, and the representatives of that community had made it clear that they did not want it to be considered as a national or ethnic minority. There was an understanding in the Czech Republic that the rights of minorities extended to persons who were not citizens. However, the Act in question had been

based largely on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities which allowed the restriction to citizens of certain rights, such as the right to education in the national minority's language. In practice, non-citizens from many national minorities benefited from the same measures as their counterparts who were citizens. The Czech Republic had also received many new immigrants from certain countries farther afield, in particular Viet Nam. The Government had taken steps to ensure the integration of such new minority groups, and it would be legally obliged to provide them with the same rights as other national minorities, including schooling in their language, if their numbers grew sufficiently.

12. Mr. FUCHS (Czech Republic) said, with regard to international labour conventions, that the Government had considered ratification of International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 168 concerning Employment Promotion and Protection against Unemployment. In most respects, Czech legislation was already in compliance with the provisions of that Convention. However, there was some reluctance to ratify it because the current unemployment benefits paid out by the Government, though in line with levels considered transitional in that instrument, were lower than those set as the ultimate objectives by the Convention. The Czech Republic had ratified the European Code of Social Security and ILO Convention No. 102 concerning Minimum Standards of Social Security. The ILO Labour Inspection Convention, (No. 81) had not yet been ratified because of the requirement for a single, integrated labour inspection structure. The Czech Republic had numerous specialized labour inspectorates which had not as yet been integrated into a single body. A bill currently being drawn up was expected to correct that situation by 2004, thus paving the way for ratification of that Convention and the Labour Inspection (Agriculture) Convention (No. 129). As for the Social Policy (Basic Aims and Standards) Convention (No. 117), after consulting with its social partners the Government had decided that ratification was not necessary, as the instrument mainly addressed the needs of developing countries. Ratification of the Equality of Treatment (Social Security) Convention (No. 118) had been recommended by the Government in early 2002, but Parliament had refused to take action owing to doubts concerning the exportability of certain benefits and the ability of the Czech Republic to pay for them. The Minimum Age Convention (No. 138) had been the subject of discussion on numerous occasions. The Government had prepared a bill on the protection of children at work to address certain lacunae in the legislation relating to children between the ages of 12 and 15 working in family enterprises and those working in culture, sports, advertising or the arts. It intended to submit the Convention for ratification once that bill had been adopted.

13. The Screening Act had been the subject of much deliberation by Parliament and the Constitutional Court. At one point, approximately 50 Members of Parliament had petitioned the Court to strike it down. However, the Court had in early 2002 upheld the Act as legislation that was required for the transformation of society and for the reform of the public administration.

14. There was no hindrance to foreigners' enjoyment of the trade union rights set forth in the international conventions signed by the Czech Republic. The ambiguous term "citizen" employed in domestic legislation, was a relic of a previous era; it referred not only to Czech citizens but to legal permanent residents. However, international conventions took precedence over domestic legislation.

15. Mr. SCHORM (Czech Republic) said that the law governing family relations was based on equality of men and women. Paragraph 18 of the Family Act stipulated that in marriage the rights and obligations of the woman were identical to those of the man, both of them being required to live together, respect each other, rear their children together and create a healthy home environment. Domestic violence was covered by criminal law and not explicitly by family law.

16. Mr. FUCHS (Czech Republic) said that unemployment had traditionally been high among women. At the end of 2001 the unemployment rate among women had been 10.4 per cent as against 7 per cent for men. One cause was the discriminatory practices of certain employers, who preferred to employ men in the belief that women might require maternity leave. An attempt to curtail such practices had been introduced with the 1999 Employment Act, which prohibited sex discrimination in job advertising. Such discriminatory advertising was employed by many foreign firms, even though it was illegal in their own countries.

17. Although labour inspectors had acted against offenders, and the situation had improved, many employers still asked women offensive questions regarding their marriage and pregnancy plans. With the assistance of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the Government encouraged women to sue in the case of such unlawful discrimination. Women returning to the labour market from maternity leave received particular attention from the employment services and were encouraged to pursue retraining courses if jobs were not readily available.

18. Labour law, which sought to reconcile family and working life, had been enhanced with the amendment in 2000 of the Labour Code. Although the Code encouraged more flexible forms of employment, regrettably they were not widespread. The Czech Republic lagged far behind most European countries in its ratio of part-time to full-time work, an area that warranted priority attention. The Government encouraged employers to espouse flexible forms of labour and had solicited the support of women's organizations in an effort to change societal attitudes - common among certain women as well as employers - that men were breadwinners and women homemakers. Although it would require at least a generation to effect that change, the system of maternity and paternity leave ensured that children did not suffer unduly.

19. Concerning the questions relating to the status of foreigners in the labour market, there were currently 100,000 foreign workers legally residing in the Czech Republic, 63 per cent of them Slovaks, under a freedom-of-movement and mutual-employment agreement. The remaining 37 per cent comprised Ukrainians, Poles, and citizens of the Balkan States, the successor States to the former Yugoslavia and, to a lesser extent, some Western European countries. There were no constraints on the employment of foreigners in possession of a valid residence and work permit. The latter was issued for a period of one year, renewable, for a specific job and became invalid once that job had terminated. The holder could seek further employment through any employment centre and, if successful, would be issued a new work permit on specific terms for that particular position; otherwise the applicant was required to leave the country. Only legal permanent residents were guaranteed training.

20. One of the most important aspects of the labour situation was the restructuring of industry. Privatized companies paid higher wages, maintained higher performance and safety standards and offered more flexible working conditions, always in conformity with national labour regulations, in which the rights enshrined in the Covenant were guaranteed. There were as yet no agencies offering temporary employment, but consideration was being given to their establishment. At the time of the privatization of the energy sector in the northern part of the country, the Government had laid down the strict condition that the restructuring process - entailing layoffs - must not be completed in fewer than 10 years so as not to generate social tensions in the most affected areas, such as northern Moravia and northern Bohemia, where the 16 per cent unemployment rate was well above the average.

21. Regarding labour legislation, the Czech Republic had a long tradition of labour inspection, in accordance with ILO Convention No. 81. Harmonization of health and safety legislation with new standards was likely to be completed by the end of 2002. All ministries were currently establishing special bodies, with a grant from the European Union, to ensure proper enforcement of legislative amendments.

22. There were 5,712 hygiene and health protection inspectors and 400 labour inspectors in the country. A move was afoot to overhaul the inspection system, and introduce shorter, more frequent visits for specific inspections with recommendations and follow-up, as against the current system in which inspectors spent several days at a work site only every few years. Employers were under increasing pressure to introduce appropriate standards for preventing work injuries, an important requirement of the country's accession to the European Union. Inspectors could visit the workplace and take an immediate decision for work to be suspended if serious defects were identified. If the situation was not rapidly remedied, employers would be heavily fined. It was compulsory, even for the many firms without trade union representatives, to have health and safety representatives. Although unsafe conditions were not a criminal offence, employees were at liberty to seek compensation directly through the courts.

23. The National Employment Plan was a mid-term programming document in the context of the country's accession to the European Union. Although many industries had been privatized before 1998, it was only in that year that proper restructuring had begun. All ministries and social partners had been requested to prepare an employment strategy to keep unemployment down, and while it had risen it had been contained at under 10 per cent. Unemployment had, in fact, peaked at 9 per cent in 2001, since which time it had been steadily declining - with the exception of northern Bohemia and northern Moravia - apart from a seasonal increase at the beginning of 2002. The Government's strategy followed the European Union's Employment Guidelines and was based on the four pillars of employability, support for enterprise, encouragement of employers and employees to work together to adapt to the new global economic situation, and the elimination of all forms of discrimination in the labour market. Preventive measures were in force for young people and those at risk of long-term unemployment; there were also incentives to help them find jobs themselves.

24. As far as persons with disabilities were concerned, employers already had to comply with legislation that required them either to employ a certain percentage of disabled persons or to take compensatory measures. However, the figures available showed that disabled persons were more likely to be unemployed. Employment agencies had therefore adopted a so-called "comprehensive rehabilitation" approach which drew on the various programmes run by different ministries in order to allow disabled persons to fulfil their potential by providing special training for them and assistance for employers who hired severely disabled persons. The rehabilitation scheme, as defined in the employment bill about to be adopted by Parliament, was consistent with the United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities and would provide financial incentives to firms employing disabled persons.

25. The problem of non-payment of wages had been largely overcome by the introduction of new legislation, which was harmonized with European Union and International Labour Organization standards, to protect employees when employers became insolvent. Moreover, bankruptcy laws had been amended to give employees the status of creditors, so that if they were not paid for three months they were entitled to compensation of up to two-and-a-half times the national average wage and could go to court to initiate bankruptcy proceedings. Regular inspections by the labour offices also helped ensure that employers fulfilled their legal obligations in respect of paying wages.

26. He was unable to give any precise figures on the impact in the Czech Republic of the European Union's PHARE programme (Programme of Assistance for Economic Reconstruction in the Countries of Central and Eastern Europe). Although the national PHARE programme had been launched in 2000, it had not been expected to begin to take effect until 2001 or 2002. Its objectives included the social inclusion and integration of vulnerable persons and groups, which would include the Roma. Again, he could not give precise figures on the number of Roma who were unemployed, as the labour offices only kept data on job applicants, not on every unemployed person. Moreover, the Czech Government had earlier concluded that to collect data identifying individuals as Roma would probably be a violation of their right to protection of their personal data, and the labour offices did not record the ethnic origin of job applicants. Nevertheless, unemployment was high among the Roma: it was reliably estimated at between 50 and 70 per cent. The main reasons for that were their lack of qualifications, other handicaps such as poor health, and in some cases their attitude towards work. Several projects carried out in the 1990s to help them find employment had led to the conclusion that retraining them without offering them special counselling was a waste of time and money: many of those who had been retrained and offered a job had left the job after just a few months. The current approach was therefore to educate the person in the basic principles of employment relationships and assess their skills and aptitudes before retraining them. The labour offices then looked for a job for them or approached employers to create a job especially for them: in the latter case, the labour office would subsidize the cost to the employer of hiring the person.

27. In reply to questions about the minimum wage, he admitted that it had been very low until 1998. However, it had been increased regularly since then and had more than doubled in the past three years, to 5,700 Czech koruny. The net minimum wage was 15 per cent higher than

the subsistence level and thus encouraged people to look for and stay in a job. In recent years the increases in the minimum wage had been negotiated with representatives of employers and employees and under the recently amended Labour Code the Government would begin to review the minimum wage at the beginning of each year to take into account price rises in the previous year. That approach to index-linking had been commended by the European Union in the context of the Czech Republic's preparations for membership of the Union.

28. Ms. BARSOVA (Czech Republic) confirmed that asylum-seekers and refugees had access to information on their human rights. Under the Asylum Act, the Government had a duty to support financially non-governmental organizations that provided asylum-seekers with counselling on the procedures for applying for asylum and on their rights. The Act also required municipalities to provide refugees with housing, access to the labour market and information on their rights. She also informed the Committee that the Czech Republic had ratified the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness in December 2001 and was in the process of ratifying both the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the European Convention on Nationality.

29. Mr. CINK (Czech Republic), replying to questions on human rights education, said that there were no educational or training programmes in the Czech Republic that were not open to both women and men, except for those leading to certain positions in the Roman Catholic Church. Human rights education was part of the curriculum in all types of schools, teacher training colleges and regional centres providing in-service training for teachers. His Government had recently produced a report on human rights education detailing the activities of the various ministries in that area: for example, the Ministry of the Interior offered courses on such topics as police ethics and the police in a multicultural society, while the Ministry of Justice ran programmes on human rights issues for judges, prosecutors, prison staff and other law-enforcement officers. The Ministry of Education cooperated with a number of non-governmental organizations to provide effective human rights education throughout the country, and had made available to teachers Czech translations of the major human rights instruments, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, with guidelines on how to incorporate them into their teaching. The translations were also available in electronic form on the Internet.

30. Mr. FUCHS (Czech Republic) said he did not believe that sexual abuse of children was widespread in his country. A thorough investigation into the allegations of such abuse along the border with Germany, in which the Czech authorities had cooperated fully with their German counterparts, had shown the allegations to be groundless. In fact, a very small number of tourists had been lured into people's homes with promises of sex with young persons, but once inside they had simply been robbed and no sexual abuse had occurred. Nevertheless, following the World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, the Czech Government had formulated a national plan to combat such exploitation by raising awareness of the problem, taking preventive measures and providing help for victims.

31. Mr. VESELÝ (Czech Republic), replying to a question by Mr. Ahmed, said that the system of social security was based on the provision of benefits or social services. His Government attached great importance to preventing social problems, but also endeavoured to

provide effective help where they occurred. Although the social security system continued to have many shortcomings, significant improvements had been made in recent years as the Government had taken steps to align its system with European Union standards. It intended to define legally binding national priorities in the field of social services. For example, a bill was being prepared on State social support.

2. Some 28 shelters had been opened for women and children in need, in particular for victims of domestic violence. Specialized street workers had been trained to address the specific problem of young boys working as child prostitutes in Prague. Such services were provided primarily by non-governmental organizations and the municipalities, with State funding, and were mostly available in the large cities; efforts were being made to provide similar services in smaller towns.

33. Mr. FUCHS (Czech Republic) said that since 1998 his Government had accorded particular attention to the situation of the Roma minority and had welcomed the efforts of the Roma to integrate into Czech society. Replying to a question about the exploitation of poor members of the Roma minority by wealthier members, he said he understood that wealthy employers from the Roma minority often preferred to recruit staff from the majority society. Consequently, measures had been adopted to encourage the recruitment of Roma employees.

34. In 1999 the Government had adopted a comprehensive programme to promote the integration of the Roma minority into mainstream society. The programme, which aimed to address the economic, social and cultural rights of the Roma, was reviewed on an ongoing basis.

35. In order to address the problems faced by the Roma minority, it was essential for an open dialogue to take place between the Government and non-governmental organizations. A government council met regularly with representatives of the Roma to seek solutions to the most serious problems. The Government was funding independent research into the situation of the Roma, for example with regard to housing.

36. The Roma had faced difficulties in the territory of Czechoslovakia for hundreds of years, but only recently, with the transition to a market economy, had the issue been revealed to the rest of the world. Efforts were now under way to devise long-term solutions to their problems.

Articles 10-12 of the Covenant

37. Mr. ATANGANA said the question of marriage needed further clarification. According to the State party's written replies, a consenting declaration could be made either before a registrar or before an authority of a church or religious society. It would be interesting to know whether a couple who had been married in a registry office could have their marriage solemnized by a religious authority. Despite Act No. 308/1991 on religious freedom and the status of churches and religious societies, only 21 churches were currently authorized to solemnize marriages. The Government should indicate how those churches had been selected.

38. He failed to understand how the proposed amendment of the Penal Code to allow victims of domestic violence to halt prosecution proceedings where they reached agreement with their partners would help to improve the situation, given that so few women reported cases of domestic violence in the first place. Giving them the right to halt proceedings would only cause the situation to deteriorate.

39. Mr. KOLOSOV asked whether the State party intended to ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. On the issue of refugees, he noted that the Czech Republic had been a member of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development since 1995, and should endeavour to meet its commitments with regard to family reunification outlined in the Helsinki Final Act. It would be interesting to learn why refugee children under the age of 15 years were placed in foster homes, as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which the State party had ratified, did not differentiate between children under the age of 15 and those aged between 15 and 18 with regard to accommodation.

40. Mr. THAPALIA said that further information should be provided on the measures taken by the State party to prevent trafficking in persons. Despite the fact that its legal system provided protection for women and children against trafficking and sexual exploitation, prostitution continued to be a serious problem. The Czech Republic was a source country for the trafficking of women to Western Europe, in particular to Germany, and both a transit and destination country for the trafficking of persons from the former Soviet Union, Africa, Asia and the Middle East. Despite the increased efforts of the police, press reports indicated that sexual tourism involving adolescents was rife in many border regions.

41. In its concluding observations of May 1998 (A/53/38), the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women had strongly recommended the formulation and implementation of effective policies to combat prostitution and trafficking of women, and had suggested that measures to combat those crimes required not only services to victims and sanctions for perpetrators, but the design and implementation of comprehensive national social and economic policies to create new opportunities for women. The reporting State should indicate whether it had acted on those recommendations; for example, had the Government launched a national plan of action? It would be useful to receive information on any budget allocations for such a plan, the progress made in that field and the difficulties that had been encountered. If there was no such plan, did the Government intend to design any comprehensive social and economic policies to create opportunities for women?

42. Mr. PILLAY said that the answer provided to question 22 in the list of issues on the right to housing was unsatisfactory. He asked the reporting State to explain the meaning of the term "declaratory right", emphasizing that the right to housing was not a mere statement of intention. He drew attention to the Committee's General Comment No. 4 on the right to adequate housing, which affirmed that the right to housing was a fundamental and justiciable human right, and noted that individuals, as well as families, were entitled to adequate housing regardless of age, economic status, group or other affiliation or status and other such factors.

43. Further information should be provided on the process of privatization. International financial institutions had recommended, in particular, the privatization of the public housing stock. However, the liberalization of rents and the stagnation of public spending on housing could have an adverse impact on the right to housing. Would appropriate measures be taken to counter the negative impact of those economic policies?

44. There were no specific provisions in the Czech legal system to prevent racial discrimination against persons with regard to housing, and no legal aid was provided to victims of such discrimination. The Roma minority was therefore forced to live in ghettos on the outskirts of cities, with limited access to health services, schools and other basic services. It was surprising that the Government had recognized that there was a serious problem with regard to Roma housing and had outlined the affirmative action it envisaged taking but had failed to address the broader issue of discrimination faced by the Roma. The State party should indicate how the Roma minority would be affected by the privatization programme.

45. Mr. RIEDEL commended the State party on the detailed attention it had accorded the question of health in its initial report. However, in order to conduct a constructive dialogue, more detailed data needed to be made available; for example, while the figures provided on cardiovascular disease in reply to question 27 in the list of issues were interesting, further information, including disaggregated statistics, should be provided.

46. It was disappointing that legislative changes to reduce smoking and alcohol consumption in the State party were proceeding at such a cumbersome pace; details should be provided of specific measures taken to address the issue, particularly among children and adolescents.

47. Information was also needed on the results of the Action Plan for Health and the Environment and the National Health Programme. Had those programmes included any measures to address the alarming fact that a third of 15-year-old boys were regular beer drinkers?

48. He commended the State party on its candid appraisal of the controlling factors in the health of the population, including lifestyle, degradation of the living and working environment and the level of health care, although he wondered what was meant by "unsuitable sexual behaviour". The initial report revealed the difficulties faced by the Government in providing health services to the Roma population. Further information should be provided.

49. It would be useful to learn whether the Government had developed any joint programmes with other Governments to combat the very serious problem of cross-border sexual tourism, which contributed, inter alia, to the spread of HIV/AIDS. He failed to understand why the figures provided in the initial report on HIV/AIDS were so much lower than those provided by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) for the same period.

50. Mr. MALINVERNI said he was concerned by the growing consumption of alcohol and tobacco by young people, and would welcome further information on the specific measures taken by the Government to address the problem.

51. According to estimates by non-governmental organizations, there were approximately 100,000 homeless people in the Czech Republic. However, in its written replies, the State party had indicated that only 2,000 beds were available in shelters for the homeless. The Government's priority was clearly to seek a long-term solution to the problem of homelessness by addressing the housing situation; it would be interesting to know how the Government planned to address the situation of homeless people in the short term.

52. Mr. MARTYNOV said that the initial report revealed that the number of disabled citizens had climbed sharply in recent years. Could the delegation explain that increase? It would be useful to know whether the Government had a policy to address the causes of disability and what the results had been. Further statistics on disabled persons should be provided.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.